

Exhibit A

Fifteenmile_HMAP_FINAL



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Fifteenmile Herd Management Area Plan

August 2019

BLM Wyoming – Worland Field Office

**Bureau of Land Management
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Fifteenmile Herd Management Area Plan August 2019

INTRODUCTION

The Fifteenmile Herd Management Area Plan (HMAP) will establish short and long-term management objectives for the wild horse herd and their habitat within lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Worland Field Office (WFO). These objectives will guide management of the Fifteenmile Herd Management Area (HMA), and the wild horses within the HMA, over the life of the plan.

The Fifteenmile HMA is located approximately 35 miles north-west of Worland, Wyoming, within portions of Washakie, Big Horn, and Park Counties. The HMA is approximately 81,119 acres in size, with land status as shown in the following table:

Fifteenmile HMA Land Status		
Ownership	Acres	Percent of HMA
Public	70,534	87%
Wyoming State	4,283	5%
Private	6,302	8%
Totals	81,119	100%

Elevation in the HMA ranges from 4,600 feet along Fifteenmile Creek, to 6,100 feet on Tatman Mountain. Summers are extremely hot, and winters can range from mild to bitterly cold. Annual precipitation ranges from 7 to 10 inches per year. About half of the precipitation falls during the growing season from April through June, with the remainder coming in high intensity summer thunderstorms.

FORAGE UTILIZATION AND USE PATTERN MAPPING

Use pattern mapping has been conducted each year in the HMA since 1992. Forage utilization in most years has been measured as slight to light over large parts of the HMA, with many areas receiving little to no grazing use. Only in very dry years, or when the wild horse population has been over AML, have some areas of moderate use or small areas of heavy use been observed.

CONFORMANCE WITH THE WYOMING STANDARDS FOR HEALTHY RANGELANDS

Extensive rangeland health monitoring was conducted in the Fifteenmile HMA in the summer of 2017, to assess Conformance with the Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands. A detailed description of the rangeland conditions currently found in the Fifteenmile HMA can be found in this document. The rangelands within the HMA were determined to be in Conformance with the Standards. Soils throughout the Fifteenmile HMA were found to be stable and capable of supporting healthy plant communities. The monitoring data collected shows that the indicators (vegetative cover, plant composition, diversity and vigor, bare ground, litter, production, and erosion indicators) are appropriate for the ecological sites found in the HMA. Vegetative trend data collected since 1983 shows that trend is generally static to upward on the sites monitored. The one riparian segment of Fifteenmile Creek within the HMA is determined to be functioning. The rangelands are determined to be providing for wildlife forage and cover needs, or are capable of sustaining viable populations and a diversity of native plant and animal species appropriate to the habitats present.

LAND USE PLAN CONFORMANCE

Worland RMP decisions that pertain to wild horse management are as follows:

Wild Horse Management Goals and Objectives	
<p>Goal BR:11 – Manage and maintain healthy wild horses and herds inside HMAs in a thriving natural ecological balance within the productive capacity of their habitat while preserving multiple use relationships.</p> <p>Objectives-</p> <p>BR:11.1 Adjust and maintain wild horse numbers and HMAs to comply with federal policies.</p> <p>BR:11.2 Maintain or enhance herd viability and genetic integrity.</p> <p>BR:11.3 Provide opportunities for wild horse interpretation, scientific research, and viewing.</p> <p>BR:11.4 Manage wild horses to comply with local planning documents to the greatest extent practicable.</p>	
Record Number	Management Action
4139	The size of the Fifteenmile HMA will remain at 70,527 acres of BLM-administered land, out of the original 261,868 acres of BLM-administered land within the Fifteenmile HA.
4140	<p>The Sand Draw HA is 15,302 acres (total acres in planning area, including BLM-administered, BOR, state, and private lands).</p> <p>The Zimmerman Springs HA is 12,277 acres (total acres in planning area, including BLM-administered, BOR, state, and private lands).</p> <p>The Alkali Spring Creek HA is 5,183 acres (total acres in planning area, including BLM-administered, BOR, state, and private lands).</p> <p>These HAs will not be managed for wild horses.</p>
4141	Manage the Fifteenmile HMA for an initial appropriate management level of 70 to 160 wild horses, not counting foals, in an attempt to maintain a population of 100 adult wild horses adjusted as necessary based upon monitoring.
4142	Base future adjustments to the appropriate management level on monitoring information and multiple use considerations through development of and/or revisions to HMA Plans. Update HMA plans to include Greater Sage-Grouse objectives.
4143	Manage BLM-administered land within the Fifteenmile HMA to maintain or enhance conformance with the <i>Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands</i> .
4144	Employ selective removal criteria, in accordance with current national policies, during periodic gathers to increase desired genetic characteristics and avoid genetic depression.
4145	Consider the use of natural and artificial population control measures as needed to maintain the wild horse populations within the established appropriate management level ranges.

4146	Conduct all activities in compliance with relevant court orders and agreements as applicable to the management situation.
4147	Do not actively promote the Fifteenmile HMA to the public and retain the current remote natural characteristics.
4148	Apply seasonal restrictions from February 1 to July 31 to prevent foal abandonment or jeopardy of wild horse health and welfare, as appropriate, to surface-disturbing and disruptive activities in the Fifteenmile HMA.
4149	Avoid and discourage organized special recreation permits using domestic horses in the Fifteenmile HMA.
4150	Avoid wild horse gathers 6-weeks before or 6-weeks after peak foaling season. To the extent possible, conduct wild horse gathers in the fall, after peak foaling has occurred and when temperatures are lower to reduce stress on the animals.

Implementation of the HMAP update is consistent with the authority provided in 43 CFR 4700 and the 1971 Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act (WFRHBA). The HMAP is needed to manage wild horses within the Fifteenmile HMA to maintain the wild horse herd as a self-sustaining population of healthy animals in balance with other uses and the productive capacity of their habitat and attain the objectives within this document.

HISTORIC OBJECTIVES

The Decision Record approving the current Fifteenmile HMAP, signed May 7, 1985, established the existing boundary of the HMA, as well as objectives for management of the HMA. Below is a description of the HMA management objectives or desired condition for the herd and its habitat compared with the existing conditions.

1. Improve the range condition on all key areas to a good condition rating within 20 years.

Existing Condition: Range condition was assessed on 7 key areas within the HMA in 2017. At 6 of the 7 key areas, range condition was greater than 50%, which is the threshold for good condition. At the other key area, range condition was 49%. This objective has been largely met.

2. Provide fenced, yearlong water sources throughout the HMA by piping water to troughs designed to supply winter water. These facilities will be capable of being turned on or off to control wild horse utilization and/or movements.

Existing Condition: The WFO has developed two solar powered water wells within the HMA to provide reliable water for wild horses during dry periods. Extensive stockwater reservoir maintenance has also been completed every several years to maintain reservoirs in functional condition. Attempting to control wild horse movements with water availability has not been successful, as the wild horses in the Fifteenmile HMA will travel several miles from water to preferred feeding areas. Providing water in numerous locations has resulted in good wild horse distribution throughout the HMA. During winter, the wild horses utilize snow for water. This specific objective is no longer applicable.

3. Manage livestock grazing within the HMA to avoid and minimize the conflict with wild horses and wildlife.

Existing Condition: Permitted livestock grazing within the HMA has been limited to domestic sheep grazing during the dormant season since creation of the HMA, to minimize dietary overlap with wild horses. Most of the livestock grazing permit holders within the HMA do not

run sheep, and have taken voluntary non-use for several years. Very little domestic livestock grazing has occurred within the HMA since 1985. This objective has been met.

4. Limit yearly utilization to 50% on key species on key areas and 25% on south slopes and upper ridges.

Existing Condition: Forage utilization data has been collected yearly, and use pattern mapping of the HMA has been completed annually since 1992. In general, forage utilization has only exceeded moderate use in preferred horse use areas during dry years with very low forage production, particularly when drought years have coincided with years of high wild horse numbers. In most years, forage utilization is generally very slight to light over the majority of the HMA. This objective has been met.

5. To control population growth, establish a sex ratio of approximately 60 percent males and 40 percent females through selective removal of animals and maintain a young/adult ratio of approximately 15-20 percent young under 2 years old.

Existing Condition: The 60 male to 40 female sex ratio has been maintained after most wild horse gathers and removals in the Fifteenmile HMA. The young/adult wild horse ratio has varied over time, depending upon the Selective Removal Policy in effect at the time of a gather. This objective has been partially met, and is now guided by the current Selective Removal Policy, which stipulates that as many young horses as possible be removed because of their higher adoptability.

APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT LEVEL

The current Appropriate Management Level (AML) for the Fifteenmile HMA is stated as 70 to 160 mature horses. Foals are not counted toward the AML. The AML was set in the original Fifteenmile HMAP. The following table indicates the approximate wild horse population in the HMA each year since 1985:

Estimated Wild Horse Population by Year					
Year	Number of Horses	Year	Number of Horses	Year	Number of Horses
1985	78	1997	189	2009	392
1986	93	1998	220	2010	111
1987	112	1999	250	2011	122
1988	134	2000	297	2012	151
1989	194	2001	142	2013	195
1990	232	2002	172	2014	240
1991	279	2003	202	2015	298
1992	175	2004	230	2016	369
1993	203	2005	164	2017	458
1994	239	2006	205	2018	567
1995	121	2007	256		
1996	167	2008	320		

Estimated Wild Horse Population by Year
Average Wild Horse Population Per Year – 223 Horses

The table above was created using formal wild horse population inventory data, as well as ground-based observations and estimates in years that a formal population inventory was not conducted. The table reflects the total number of wild horses, not just adult horses. Population inventories are usually conducted in late fall or winter, when it is nearly impossible to distinguish current year foals accurately. Previous gathers and removals of excess wild horses were conducted in 1991, 1994, 2000, 2004, and 2009, resulting in lower population numbers the following years.

No fertility control vaccines or other artificial population growth suppression methods have been used on the wild horses in the Fifteenmile HMA. Other than the slight alteration of the sex ratio to help slow population growth, the wild horses have been maintained in as natural a manner as possible.

The original Fifteenmile HMAP stated the AML as follows: "The area will be managed for an average of 100 head of adult animals with a 5 year fluctuation starting at 70-80 head and moving to 150-160 head of adult animals. Stringent control of these numbers by implementing a five year gathering plan will help improve the overall habitat." Adult animals were defined in the plan as those 2 years old and older.

In 1990, the Worland District Office completed the Evaluation and Update to Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Management Area Plan / Capture Plan, Environmental Assessment No. WY-016-EA0-08 (BLM 1990). The purpose of this evaluation was to assess monitoring data (vegetative trend, forage utilization, precipitation, wild horse and livestock actual use) collected since the HMAP was approved. The analysis concluded that the carrying capacity of the HMA was estimated to range from 2838 AUMs to 5789 AUMs. The analysis also concluded that the current AML of 70 to 160 mature wild horses was appropriate based upon the data. The Decision Record for this Evaluation and Update was affirmed by the Interior Board of Land Appeals in 1991 (IBLA 90-414).

The Grass Creek RMP (BLM 1998), which preceded the current Worland RMP, allocated forage for wild horses and domestic livestock within the HMA. The Grass Creek RMP stated as follows: "Wild horses will be allocated 2,300 animal unit months (AUMs) of forage annually." This forage allocation was based upon an upper population level of 160 adult horses (2 years old and over), plus 32 yearlings, plus 38 foals, assuming a 20 percent reproductive rate, for an upper population level of 230 total wild horses.

The current Worland RMP states the AML as follows: "Manage the Fifteenmile HMA for an initial appropriate management level of 70 to 160 wild horses, not counting foals, in an attempt to maintain a population of 100 adult wild horses adjusted as necessary based upon monitoring."

Genetic testing was completed on the wild horses in the Fifteenmile HMA following gathers in 1991 and 2000. Genetic samples were analyzed by Dr. E. Gus Cothran, Department of Veterinary Science, Texas A&M University. His conclusions and recommendations regarding genetic diversity in the Fifteenmile herd are summarized as follows:

"Genetic variability of the Fifteenmile herd is very high, among the highest levels seen in horse populations. The high variation is probably due to a mixed origin of the herd and possibly continued gene flow. The genetic similarity and RML cluster analysis support the mixed nature of this herd."

"No action is needed at this time. As long as the population size is kept at around 100 individuals, genetic variation should not decay to detrimental levels for several generations."

"Much of the genetic diversity of this herd is in rare variants that could be lost quickly if population size is maintained at extremely low levels." (Cothran, 2001)

APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT LEVEL ANALYSIS

As illustrated in the wild horse population table, the wild horse population has ranged from a low population of 78 wild horses in 1985, to a current high population of 567 wild horses. Since the Fifteenmile HMA was established, the wild horse population has averaged approximately 223 wild horses per year. Forage utilization in most years has been measured as slight to light over large parts of the HMA, with many areas receiving little to no grazing use. Only in very dry years, generally when the wild horse population has been over AML, has moderate use or small areas of heavy use been observed. The rangelands within the HMA have been determined to be meeting the Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands.

The current low AML of 70 horses is below the 100 horse population recommended by Dr. Cothran to maintain acceptable genetic diversity in the wild horse herd. In only two years since creation of the HMA has the estimated wild horse population in the HMA been below 100 head. The current upper AML of 160 horses is below the population level for which forage has been allocated for wild horses, which is 230 horses. The average wild horse population since creation of the HMA, 223 horses, has resulted in maintaining healthy rangelands in the HMA. For these reasons, the AML for the Fifteenmile HMA in the future will be stated as **100 to 230 horses**. This AML will continue to be evaluated in the future, in conjunction with other multiple uses, such as livestock grazing and wildlife habitat, to determine if further adjustments to the AML are necessary.

HERD MANAGEMENT AREA PLAN

The Fifteenmile HMAP will largely continue the past management of the HMA, with updated population, habitat, and monitoring objectives. This past management has resulted in a healthy, diverse, and genetically viable population of wild horses, as well as healthy rangelands that are in Conformance with the Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands. Under this strategy, wild horses and their habitat will be managed over the life of the plan as follows:

- The HMA will be managed for a wild horse population of approximately 100-230 wild horses.
- A census of the Fifteenmile HMA will be conducted every 3-4 years to determine the wild horse population size.
- Excess animals will be removed to the low-range of the AML upon a determination that excess animals are present.
- During future gathers, the sex ratio of the population would be adjusted slightly in favor of males as compared to females (60 male / 40 female sex ratio).
- Horses that display good conformation and a variety of colors will be selected first to be placed back in the HMA.
- Wild horses within the HMA will be sampled for genetic diversity. If genetic diversity declines, a few mares from another Wyoming HMA will be introduced to the HMA.
- Fertility controls may be used as directed through the most recent direction of the National Wild Horse and Burro Program. The use of any fertility controls will use the most current best management practices and humane procedures available for the implementation of the controls.
- The existing water development projects within the Fifteenmile HMA will be maintained as needed to ensure that water availability is adequate to disperse wild horse use. The development of new water projects will be considered as needed. Additional NEPA compliance would be completed for any new projects.
- The AML will be evaluated, as needed, based upon the collection of monitoring data such as actual use, forage utilization, use pattern mapping, range condition, trend, and precipitation.
- The Fifteenmile HMAP will remain in effect until superseded by another document.

MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

- Future gather operations will be conducted in accordance with the SOPs described in outlined in Attachment 1 and/or the National Wild Horse Gather Contract.
- Future gather operations will be conducted in accordance with the most current direction and policies from the Washington Office and Wyoming State Office.
- Current IMs
 - IM No. 2015-151, Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program for Wild Horse and Burro Gathers
 - IM No. 2015-070, Animal Health, Maintenance, Evaluation and Response
 - IM No. 2015-061, Wild Horse and Burro Gathers: Internal and External Communicating and Reporting
 - IM No. 2013-060, Wild Horse and Burro Gathers: Management by Incident Command System
 - Instruction Memorandum No. 2013-059, Wild Horse and Burro Gathers: Comprehensive Animal Welfare Policy
 - IM No. 2013-058, Wild Horse and Burro Gathers: Public and Media Management
 - IM No. 2010-135, Gather Policy, Selective Removal Criteria, and Management Considerations for Reducing Population Growth Rates
 - Instruction Memorandum No. 2010-057, Wild Horse & Burro Population Inventory and Estimation
 - IM No. 2009-062, Wild Horse and Burro Genetic Baseline Sampling

- Except in emergency situations, wild horse gathers will be conducted in the fall, when temperatures are cooler, to reduce stress on the animals. The helicopter drive method and helicopter assisted roping from horseback will be the primary gather methods used. To the extent possible gather sites (traps) will be located in previously disturbed areas. Post-gather, every effort will be made to return released animals to the same general area from which they were gathered.
- During gathers, an attempt will be made to gather all of the horses within the HMA. Past gathers in the Fifteenmile HMA have been successful in gathering approximately 95 percent of the horses within the HMA. All horses residing outside of the HMA boundary will also be gathered and removed.
- An Animal and Plant Inspection Service (APHIS) or other licensed veterinarian will be on-site as needed during gathers, to examine animals and make recommendations to BLM for the care and treatment of the wild horses. Decisions to humanely euthanize animals in field situations will be made in conformance with BLM policy.
- Animals will be removed using a selective removal strategy. Selective removal criteria for the Fifteenmile HMA include:
 - First Priority: Age Class Four Years and Younger
 - Second Priority: Age Class Eleven to Nineteen Years Old
 - Third Priority: Age Class Five to Ten Years Old
 - Wild horses Twenty Years Old and Older will not be removed from the HMA.
- Data including sex and age distribution, reproduction, condition class information (using the Henneke rating system), color, size, and other information may be recorded, along with the disposition of that animal (removed or released).
- Hair samples will be acquired every other regularly scheduled gather, to determine whether current management is maintaining acceptable genetic diversity (avoiding inbreeding depression).
- Approximately 100 horses will be returned to the HMA after a gather, in a ratio of 60 males to 40 females (60 stallions and 40 mares), as a breeding population. A sample suggested age and sex distribution is presented in Attachment 2.
- Any horses gathered and determined, with consultation between BLM and Wyoming Livestock Board brand inspectors, to be domestic animals will be turned over to the local brand inspector in accordance with state law.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Specific management, monitoring and implementation objectives are summarized below:

Management Objective(s)	Monitoring Objective(s)	Implementation Objective(s)
<u>A. Control Population Numbers</u> Manage wild horse populations within the established AML range to protect the range from deterioration associated with overpopulation.	Conduct population inventories a minimum of once every 3 years. Conduct additional inventories as funding and time allow. Determine wild horse herd size.	Schedule gathers to remove excess wild horses when the total wild horse population exceeds the Upper AML for the HMA (about every 5-6 years), when animals routinely reside on lands outside the Fifteenmile HMA boundary (i.e. use is more than seasonal drift), or whenever animal health/condition is at risk. Attempt to gather all of the wild horses within and surrounding the HMA. Make every effort to conduct gathers in the fall, to minimize stress on the animals.

Management Objective(s)	Monitoring Objective(s)	Implementation Objective(s)
<p><u>B. Additional Population Control Measures</u></p> <p>Objective 1: Adjust the sex ratio of the breeding population slightly in favor of males.</p> <p>Objective 2: Consider other population control methods as needed.</p>	<p>Document the number of stallions/mares released following each gather.</p> <p>Monitor annual population growth rate.</p>	<p>Manage a population of 100-230 animals within the HMA. Within the population, achieve a sex ratio of 60 males to 40 females immediately following gathers.</p> <p>New population control vaccines and/or population growth suppression methods may be used within the HMA as directed through the most recent direction of the National Wild Horse and Burro Program. The use of any new fertility controls and/or population growth suppression methods would use the most current best management practices and humane procedures available for the implementation of the new controls.</p>
<p><u>C. Age Distribution</u></p> <p>Assure all age classes are represented post-gather.</p>	<p>Monitor post-gather results.</p>	<p>Attempt to gather all wild horses in the HMA during gathers.</p> <p>Manage wild horses to achieve the following relative age distribution following gathers:</p> <p>20% Young Age Class (Ages 0-4)</p> <p>50% Middle Age Class (Age 5-10)</p> <p>30% Old Age Class (Age 11+)</p>
<p><u>D. Assure Genetic Diversity</u></p> <p>Maintain adequate levels of genetic diversity within the herd, so as to avoid excessive levels of inbreeding.</p>	<p>Collect hair samples every other gather to detect any changes in observed heterozygosity ($H_o=0.431$ in 2000).</p>	<p>If genetic diversity declines more than 10% from the baseline, 3-4 mares from another Wyoming HMA displaying similar or desired characteristics, such as animal size and conformation, of the horses within the Fifteenmile HMA will be released to improve the genetic diversity in the HMA.</p>
<p><u>E. Additional Selective Removal Criteria</u></p> <p>Maintain or improve animal conformation.</p>	<p>Maintain photos of wild horses released back into the HMA and/or introduced to the HMA.</p>	<p>In selecting animals for return to the range post-gather, animal size and conformation will have priority over color.</p>
<p><u>F. Sustain Healthy Populations of Wild Horses</u></p> <p>Manage wild horses to achieve an average body condition class score of 3+.</p>	<p>Visually observe wild horse body condition (Henneke Condition Class Method) throughout the year.</p> <p>Record average body condition and document during periodic gather and population inventory operations.</p>	<p>Maintain existing water developments to assist in limiting the distance horses trail to and from water sources.</p> <p>Conduct emergency removals when needed if animal body condition is less than Henneke Condition Class Score 3 due to drought, wildfire or other unplanned/unforeseen event.</p>

Management Objective(s)	Monitoring Objective(s)	Implementation Objective(s)
<p><u>G. Assure Rangeland Health</u></p> <p>Objective 1. Assess rangeland health approximately every 10 years on BLM administered lands.</p> <p>Objective 2. Limit utilization by all herbivores to 50% of the current year's above ground primary production for key species.</p>	<p>Locate additional key monitoring areas within the HMA as needed.</p> <p>Assess rangeland health using procedures outlined in Technical Reference 1734-6 and/or the most recent rangeland health technical reference adopted by the local district office.</p> <p>Measure forage utilization at key areas, with use pattern mapping annually.</p>	<p>A Rangeland Health Assessment was completed for the HMA in 2018. Analyze rangeland health through the collection of vegetative trend, precipitation, forage utilization and use pattern mapping every 10 years.</p> <p>Establish additional site-specific resource management objectives for key areas, as needed.</p> <p>Based on above, re-adjust AML or identify management actions to address/resolve rangeland health issues, as needed/appropriate. Re-adjustments in AML will be based on vegetation monitoring, herd monitoring and water availability as the limiting factors.</p>
<p><u>H. Assure Riparian Area Health</u></p> <p>Maintain / Improve riparian condition throughout the HMA.</p>	<p>Re-evaluate riparian functionality every ten years using the Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) method on the one riparian segment of Fifteenmile Creek within the HMA.</p>	<p>Maintain existing water sources or develop new water sources as needed to lessen wild horse use of the riparian area.</p>
<p><u>I. Disperse Wild Horse Use</u></p> <p>Objective 1: Disperse wild horse use throughout the Fifteenmile HMA so that no parts of the HMA receive greater than light to moderate grazing use, except occasionally in drought years.</p> <p>Objective 2: Ensure adequate water is available throughout the hot summer months to disperse wild horse use.</p>	<p>Measure utilization at key areas, with use pattern mapping annually.</p> <p>Monitor water sources continuously through the summer months to ensure adequate water availability and to determine if/when supplemental water hauling will be needed.</p> <p>Monitor utilization to determine whether construction of new water developments is needed.</p> <p>Monitor movements of wild horses to determine use patterns, seasonal migrations and range of travel.</p>	<p>Maintain or re-construct existing water developments to assist in limiting the distance horses trail to and from water sources.</p> <p>Construct new water developments as needed to disperse wild horse use into under-utilized parts of the HMA. Construction of new projects would require completion of a site-specific environmental analysis.</p> <p>Haul water during times of drought to provide water in areas with adequate forage.</p> <p>Control the spread of invasive or noxious species within the HMA to maintain or increase desirable forage production.</p> <p>Use population inventories, on-the-ground observations, or other tracking methods, in conjunction with use pattern mapping, to monitor movements of wild horses within the HMA, and identify preferred use areas.</p> <p>Do not allow fencing within the HMA boundary that would restrict wild horse movements.</p>

Management Objective(s)	Monitoring Objective(s)	Implementation Objective(s)
<p><u>J. Maintain Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat</u></p> <p>Ensure that the quality of Greater Sage-Grouse PHMA habitat within the Fifteenmile HMA is maintained.</p>	<p>Measure forage utilization annually to ensure that residual forage levels are adequate for sage-grouse nesting, brood-rearing, and wintering.</p>	<p>Analyze rangeland health through the collection of vegetative trend, precipitation, forage utilization and use pattern mapping every 10 years.</p> <p>Follow Greater Sage-Grouse Best Management Practices as specified in the Worland RMP during maintenance or construction of range improvement projects.</p>
<p><u>K. Partnerships</u></p> <p>Involve stakeholders, organizations, other agencies, universities, adjacent land owners, and the public in achieving the objectives of the HMAP.</p>	<p>Keep an interested public list for the Fifteenmile HMA. Send notices, links, e-mails and/or hard copies of all wild horse management documents to those on this list.</p>	<p>Develop agreements to accomplish specific projects, monitoring, and tasks within the Fifteenmile HMA, as needed.</p> <p>Involve these groups in updates and modification of the HMAP.</p>

MONITORING PLAN

Population Management Monitoring				
Monitoring Item	How	Who	When	Actions to Take (Adaptive Management)
Manage wild horse populations within the established AML range to protect the range from deterioration associated with overpopulation.	Population Inventories through aerial flights following established protocols. Determine population number and annual growth rate.	BLM WH&B Specialist, with assistance from State and National WH&B Staff and other Field Office Staff	Conduct Population Inventories in the HMA a minimum of every three years i.e. 2018, 2021, 2024 Schedule flights in December, January and February, when possible, to utilize snow cover to obtain better tracking conditions and complete counts before foaling moratorium.	Schedule gathers to remove excess wild horses when the total population exceeds the Upper AML, when animals permanently reside outside the Fifteenmile HMA (i.e. more than seasonal drift), or when animal health/condition is at risk.
Assure all age classes are represented post gather.	Record ages of animals released post-gather.	BLM WH&B Specialist	Every gather.	Adjust age class distribution during future gathers if a relatively even age distribution cannot be achieved during the current gather.
Maintain genetic variability (avoid inbreeding depression).	Hair samples would be collected every other regularly scheduled gather, or about every 10-12 years, to detect any changes from the baseline genetic diversity ($H_o=0.431$) and to determine whether BLM's management is maintaining acceptable genetic variability (avoiding inbreeding depression).	BLM WH&B Specialist	Every other regularly scheduled gather.	If needed, introduce 3-4 mares from another Wyoming HMA displaying similar or desired characteristics of the horses within the Fifteenmile HMA to improve the genetic diversity in the HMA.
Manage wild horses to achieve an average	Visually observe wild horse body condition	BLM WH&B Specialist	Annually, at key water locations particularly during	Conduct emergency removals when needed if animal body condition is

Population Management Monitoring				
Monitoring Item	How	Who	When	Actions to Take (Adaptive Management)
Henneke body condition class score of 3+.	(Henneke condition class method). Record average body condition and document other health conditions (i.e. lameness, clubfoot etc.) during periodic gather operations.		periods of hot weather/drought. Every gather and population inventory.	less than Henneke body condition score 3 due to drought, wildfire, or other unplanned/unforeseen event.
Adjust the sex ratio of the breeding population slightly in favor of males following future gathers.	Document number of stallions/mares released following each gather. Monitor individual and herd behavior following the gather.	BLM WH&B Specialist	Every gather.	Adjust the sex ratio to 60 males / 40 females following future gathers pending monitoring results.

Habitat Management Monitoring				
Monitoring Item	How	Who	When	Actions to Take (Adaptive Management)
Assess Rangeland Health approximately every 10 years on BLM administered lands with the objective to meet the Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands. Maintain functioning riparian condition on the riparian segment of Fifteenmile Creek within the HMA.	Assess rangeland health using procedures outlined in Technical Reference 1734-6 and/or the most recent rangeland health technical reference adopted by the local district office. Re-evaluate riparian functionality using the Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) method.	BLM WH&B Specialist and WFO ID team.	Every 10 years (2028).	Monitor existing key areas, establish new key areas as needed. Based on the above, re-adjust AML or identify additional management actions to address/resolve identified rangeland health issues, as needed/appropriate.
Limit utilization by all herbivores to 50% of the current year's above ground production for key species.	Measure utilization at key areas that receive greater than slight use.	BLM WH&B Specialist	Annually, in the fall.	Maintain the wild horse population within the AML range. Consider reducing the population during periods of severe drought.

Habitat Management Monitoring				
Monitoring Item	How	Who	When	Actions to Take (Adaptive Management)
Ensure that wild horse use is spread throughout the HMA so that no area receives greater than light to moderate grazing use.	Complete use pattern mapping of the HMA. Monitor water sources to assure adequate water availability to disperse wild horse use.	BLM WH&B Specialist	Annually, in the fall. Continuously through the summer months.	Maintain the wild horse population within the AML range. Maintain existing water sources, consider development of new water sources as needed.
Maintain or improve vegetative trend within the HMA.	Evaluate vegetative trend by repeating Wyoming Permanent 10-Plot Trend Transects.	BLM WH&B Specialist	Every 10 years (2028).	Adjust AML, as needed, pending evaluation of monitoring results.
Monitor/assess annual project maintenance needs.	Site visits at water sources.	BLM WH&B Specialist	As needed, throughout the year.	Schedule and complete any necessary maintenance work. Document maintenance activities.

TRACKING LOG/PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Population Management Actions					
Description	Who	Where	When	Completed	Remarks
Conduct wild horse population inventories.	BLM	Fifteenmile HMA	Every 3-4 years. Fall or Winter.		
Schedule gathers to remove excess wild horses when the total wild horse population exceeds the Upper AML for the HMA (230 horses).	BLM	Fifteenmile HMA	Every 5-6 years, beginning in 2018, or as soon as possible thereafter. Gather in the fall.		
Assure all age classes are represented post-gather.	BLM	Fifteenmile HMA	Every gather.		
Prioritize removal of any injured, sick, and/or lame horses from the herd.	BLM	Fifteenmile HMA	Every gather.		

Population Management Actions					
Description	Who	Where	When	Completed	Remarks
Prioritize size and conformation over color when releasing animals back to the range.	BLM	Fifteenmile HMA	Every gather.		
Collect hair samples to determine whether BLMs management is maintaining acceptable genetic diversity (avoiding inbreeding depression).	BLM	Temporary holding facility and/or short term holding facility.	Every other gather from a minimum of 25 animals, preferably from those animals that are being released back into the HMA.		
Selectively release animals post-gather in a ratio of 60 males / 40 females.	BLM	Temporary holding facility.	Every gather.		

Habitat Management Actions					
Description	Who	Where	When	Completed	Remarks
Collect forage utilization data / conduct use pattern mapping.	BLM	Fifteenmile HMA key areas.	Every fall.		
Assess the HMA for Conformance with the Wyoming Standards for Healthy Rangelands.	BLM	Fifteenmile HMA.	Every 10 years, beginning in 2028.		
Maintain existing water sources and develop new water sources as needed to disperse wild horse use and limit the distance wild horses trail to and from water sources and available forage.	BLM	Stockwater wells and reservoirs within the Fifteenmile HMA.	Annually.		

HERD MANAGEMENT AREA PLANNING MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Proven mitigation and monitoring are incorporated through standard operating procedures (SOPs) that have been developed over time. These SOPs represent the "best methods" for reducing impacts associated with gathering, handling, transportation, and herd data collection. The Fifteenmile HMA will be monitored annually as outlined in the Monitoring Plan. Management may be adjusted when

monitoring data and/or other information indicates a need. In addition to monitoring, long-term evaluations will be completed at roughly ten-year intervals, or as needed, based on the results of annual evaluations. Monitoring objectives are outlined in the Monitoring Plan. Monitoring is designed to answer two primary questions:

“Did we do what we said we were going to do?”

“Was what we did effective in meeting/moving toward our objectives?”

The objective for the long-term evaluation is to determine:

“Are our objective(s) still current...or do they need to be modified?”

“Is our management on track...or do we need to make some changes?”

Significant changes needed as a result of annual or long-term evaluations may require appropriate NEPA analysis and documentation prior to implementation.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

The consultation and coordination conducted in preparing this herd management area plan is summarized in the Fifteenmile Wild Horse Herd Management Area Plan and Gather Plan Environmental Assessment. Please refer to that environmental assessment for additional information and appendices.

Attachment 1 -Standard Operating Procedures for Wild Horse Gatherers

Gathers are conducted by utilizing contractors from the Wild Horse Gatherers-Western States Contract or BLM personnel. The following standard operating procedures (SOPs) for gathering and handling wild horses apply whether a contractor or BLM personnel conduct a gather. For helicopter gathers conducted by BLM personnel, gather operations would be conducted in conformance with the *Wild Horse Aviation Management Handbook* (January 2009).

Prior to any gathering operation, the BLM would provide for a pre-gather evaluation of existing conditions in the gather area(s). The evaluation would include animal conditions, prevailing temperatures, drought conditions, soil conditions, road conditions, and a topographic map with WSA boundaries, the location of fences, other physical barriers, and acceptable gather locations in relation to animal distribution. The evaluation would determine whether the proposed activities would necessitate the presence of a veterinarian during operations. If it is determined that a large number of animals may need to be euthanized or gather operations could be facilitated by a veterinarian, these services would be arranged before the gather would proceed. The contractor would be apprised of all conditions and would be given instructions regarding the gather and handling of animals to ensure their health and welfare is protected.

Gather sites and temporary holding sites would be located to reduce the likelihood of injury and stress to the animals, and to minimize potential damage to the natural resources of the area. These sites would be located on or near existing roads whenever possible.

The primary gather methods used in the performance of gather operations include:

1. Helicopter Drive Gathering. This gather method involves utilizing a helicopter to herd wild horses into a temporary gather site.
2. Helicopter Assisted Roping. This gather method involves utilizing a helicopter to herd wild horses to ropers.
3. Bait Trapping. This gather method involves utilizing bait (e.g., water or feed) to lure wild horses into a temporary gather site.

The following procedures and stipulations would be followed to ensure the welfare, safety and humane treatment of wild horses in accordance with the provisions of 43 CFR 4700.

A. Gather Methods used in the Performance of Gather Contract Operations

The primary concern of the contractor is the safe and humane handling of all animals gathered. All gather attempts shall incorporate the following:

1. All gather sites and holding facilities locations must be approved by the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) and/or the Project Inspector (PI) prior to construction. The Contractor may also be required to change or move gather locations as determined by the COR/PI. All gather sites and holding facilities not located on public land must have prior written approval of the landowner.
2. The rate of movement and distance the animals travel shall not exceed limitations set by the COR who would consider terrain, physical barriers, access limitations, weather, extreme temperature (high and low), condition of the animals, urgency of the operation (animals facing drought, starvation, fire rehabilitation, etc.) and other factors. In consultation with the contractor the distance the animals travel would account for the different factors listed above and concerns with each HMA.
3. All gather sites, wings, and holding facilities shall be constructed, maintained and operated to handle the animals in a safe and humane manner and be in accordance with the following:

- a. Gather sites and holding facilities shall be constructed of portable panels, the top of which shall not be less than 72 inches high for horses and 60 inches high for burros, and the bottom rail of which shall not be more than 12 inches from ground level. All gather sites and holding facilities shall be oval or round in design.
 - b. All loading chute sides shall be a minimum of 6 feet high and shall be fully covered with plywood or metal without holes.
 - c. All runways shall be a minimum of 30 feet long and a minimum of 6 feet high for horses, and 5 feet high for burros, and shall be covered with plywood, burlap, plastic snow fence or like material a minimum of 1 foot to 5 feet above ground level for burros and 1 foot to 6 feet for horses. The location of the government furnished portable fly chute to restrain, age, or provide additional care for the animals shall be placed in the runway in a manner as instructed by or in concurrence with the COR/PI.
 - d. All crowding pens including the gates leading to the runways shall be covered with a material which prevents the animals from seeing out (plywood, burlap, plastic snow fence, etc.) and shall be covered a minimum of 1 foot to 5 feet above ground level for burros and 2 feet to 6 feet for horses.
 - e. All pens and runways used for the movement and handling of animals shall be connected with hinged self-locking gates.
1. No modification of existing fences would be made without authorization from the COR/PI. The Contractor shall be responsible for restoration of any fence modification which he has made.
 2. When dust conditions occur within or adjacent to the gather site or holding facility, the Contractor shall be required to wet down the ground with water.
 3. Alternate pens, within the holding facility shall be furnished by the Contractor to separate mares or jennies with small foals, sick and injured animals, estrays, or other animals the COR determines need to be housed in a separate pen from the other animals. Animals shall be sorted as to age, number, size, temperament, sex, and condition when in the holding facility so as to minimize, to the extent possible, injury due to fighting and trampling. Under normal conditions, the government would require that animals be restrained for the purpose of determining an animal's age, sex, or other necessary procedures. In these instances, a portable restraining chute may be necessary and would be provided by the government. Alternate pens shall be furnished by the Contractor to hold animals if the specific gathering requires that animals be released back into the gather area(s). In areas requiring one or more satellite gather site, and where a centralized holding facility is utilized, the contractor may be required to provide additional holding pens to segregate animals transported from remote locations so they may be returned to their traditional ranges. Either segregation or temporary marking and later segregation would be at the discretion of the COR.
 4. The Contractor shall provide animals held in the gather sites and/or holding facilities with a continuous supply of fresh clean water at a minimum rate of 10 gallons per animal per day. Animals held for 10 hours or more in the gather site or holding facilities shall be provided good quality hay at the rate of not less than two pounds of hay per 100 pounds of estimated body weight per day. The contractor would supply certified weed free hay if required by State, County, and Federal regulation.
 5. An animal that is held at a temporary holding facility through the night is defined as a horse/burro feed day. An animal that is held for only a portion of a day and is shipped or released does not constitute a feed day.
 6. It is the responsibility of the Contractor to provide security to prevent loss, injury or death of gathered animals until delivery to final destination.
 7. The Contractor shall restrain sick or injured animals if treatment is necessary. The COR/PI would determine if animals must be euthanized and provide for the destruction of such animals.

The Contractor may be required to humanely euthanize animals in the field and to dispose of the carcasses as directed by the COR/PI.

8. Animals shall be transported to their final destination from temporary holding facilities as quickly as possible after gather unless prior approval is granted by the COR for unusual circumstances. Animals to be released back into the HMA following gather operations may be held up to 21 days or as directed by the COR. Animals shall not be held in gather sites and/or temporary holding facilities on days when there is no work being conducted except as specified by the COR. The Contractor shall schedule shipments of animals to arrive at final destination between 7:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. No shipments shall be scheduled to arrive at final destination on Sunday and Federal holidays; unless prior approval has been obtained by the COR. Animals shall not be allowed to remain standing on trucks while not in transport for a combined period of greater than three (3) hours in any 24 hour period. Animals that are to be released back into the gather area may need to be transported back to the original gather site. This determination would be at the discretion of the COR or Field Office Wild Horse & Burro Specialist.

B. Gather Methods That May Be Used in the Performance of a Gather

1. Gather attempts may be accomplished by utilizing bait (feed, water, mineral licks) to lure animals into a temporary gather site. If this gather method is selected, the following applies:
2. Finger gates shall not be constructed of materials such as "T" posts, sharpened willows, etc., that may be injurious to animals.
3. All trigger and/or trip gate devices must be approved by the COR/PI prior to gather of animals.
4. Gather sites shall be checked a minimum of once every 10 hours.
5. Gather attempts may be accomplished by utilizing a helicopter to drive animals into a temporary gather site. If the contractor selects this method the following applies:
6. A minimum of two saddle-horses shall be immediately available at the gather site to accomplish roping if necessary. Roping shall be done as determined by the COR/PI. Under no circumstances shall animals be tied down for more than one-half hour.
7. The contractor shall assure that foals shall not be left behind, and orphaned.
8. Gather attempts may be accomplished by utilizing a helicopter to drive animals to ropers. If the contractor, with the approval of the COR/PI, selects this method the following applies:
9. Under no circumstances shall animals be tied down for more than one hour.
10. The contractor shall assure that foals shall not be left behind, or orphaned.
11. The rate of movement and distance the animals travel shall not exceed limitations set by the COR/PI who would consider terrain, physical barriers, weather, condition of the animals and other factors.

C. Use of Motorized Equipment

1. All motorized equipment employed in the transportation of gathered animals shall be in compliance with appropriate State and Federal laws and regulations applicable to the humane transportation of animals. The Contractor shall provide the COR/PI, if requested, with a current safety inspection (less than one year old) for all motorized equipment and tractor-trailers used to transport animals to final destination.
2. All motorized equipment, tractor-trailers, and stock trailers shall be in good repair, of adequate rated capacity, and operated so as to ensure that gathered animals are transported without undue risk or injury.
3. Only tractor-trailers or stock trailers with a covered top shall be allowed for transporting animals from gather site(s) to temporary holding facilities, and from temporary holding facilities to final destination(s). Sides or stock racks of all trailers used for transporting animals shall be a minimum height of 6 feet 6 inches from the floor. Single deck tractor-trailers 40 feet or longer shall have at least two (2) partition gates providing at least three (3) compartments within the

trailer to separate animals. Tractor-trailers less than 40 feet shall have at least one partition gate providing at least two (2) compartments within the trailer to separate the animals. Compartments in all tractor-trailers shall be of equal size plus or minus 10 percent. Each partition shall be a minimum of 6 feet high and shall have a minimum 5-foot-wide swinging gate. The use of double deck tractor-trailers is unacceptable and shall not be allowed.

4. All tractor-trailers used to transport animals to final destination(s) shall be equipped with at least one (1) door at the rear end of the trailer which is capable of sliding either horizontally or vertically. The rear door(s) of tractor-trailers and stock trailers must be capable of opening the full width of the trailer. Panels facing the inside of all trailers must be free of sharp edges or holes that could cause injury to the animals. The material facing the inside of all trailers must be strong enough so that the animals cannot push their hooves through the side. Final approval of tractor-trailers and stock trailers used to transport animals shall be held by the COR/PI.
5. Floors of tractor-trailers, stock trailers and loading chutes shall be covered and maintained with wood shavings to prevent the animals from slipping as much as possible during transport.
6. Animals to be loaded and transported in any trailer shall be as directed by the COR/PI and may include limitations on numbers according to age, size, sex, temperament and animal condition. The following minimum square feet per animal shall be allowed in all trailers:
 - 11 square feet per adult horse (1.4 linear foot in an 8 foot wide trailer);
 - 8 square feet per adult burro (1.0 linear foot in an 8 foot wide trailer);
 - 6 square feet per horse foal (0.75 linear feet in an 8-foot-wide trailer);
 - 4 square feet per burro foal (0.5 linear feet in an 8-foot-wide trailer).
7. The COR/PI shall consider the condition and size of the animals, weather conditions, distance to be transported, or other factors when planning for the movement of gathered animals. The COR/PI shall provide for any brand and/or inspection services required for the gathered animals.
8. If the COR/PI determines that dust conditions are such that the animals could be endangered during transportation, the Contractor would be instructed to adjust speed.

D. Safety and Communications

1. The Contractor shall have the means to communicate with the COR/PI and all contractor personnel engaged in the gather of wild horses utilizing a VHF/FM Transceiver or VHF/FM portable Two-Way radio. If communications are ineffective the government would take steps necessary to protect the welfare of the animals.
2. The proper operation, service and maintenance of all contractor furnished property is the responsibility of the Contractor. The BLM reserves the right to remove from service any contractor personnel or contractor furnished equipment which, in the opinion of the contracting officer or COR/PI violate contract rules, are unsafe or otherwise unsatisfactory. In this event, the Contractor would be notified in writing to furnish replacement personnel or equipment within 48 hours of notification. All such replacements must be approved in advance of operation by the Contracting Officer or his/her representative.
3. The Contractor shall obtain the necessary FCC licenses for the radio system.
4. All accidents occurring during the performance of any task order shall be immediately reported to the COR/PI.
5. Should the contractor choose to utilize a helicopter the following would apply:
 - a. The Contractor must operate in compliance with Federal Aviation Regulations, Part 91. Pilots provided by the Contractor shall comply with the Contractor's Federal Aviation Certificates, applicable regulations of the State in which the gather is located.
 - b. Fueling operations shall not take place within 1,000 feet of animals.

E. Site Clearances

1. No Personnel working at gather sites may excavate, remove, damage, or otherwise alter or deface or attempt to excavate, remove, damage or otherwise alter or deface any archaeological resource located on public lands or Indian lands.
2. Prior to setting up a gather site or temporary holding facility, the BLM would conduct all necessary clearances (archaeological, T&E, etc.). All proposed site(s) must be inspected by a government archaeologist and wildlife biologist. Once clearance has been obtained, the gather site or temporary holding facility may be set up. Said clearance shall be arranged for by the COR, PI, or other BLM employees.
3. Gather sites and temporary holding facilities would not be constructed on wetlands or riparian zones.

F. Animal Characteristics and Behavior

1. Releases of wild horses would be near available water when possible. If the area is new to them, a short-term adjustment period may be required while the wild horses become familiar with the new area.

G. Public Participation

1. Opportunities for public viewing (i.e. media, interested public) of gather operations would be made available to the extent possible; however, the primary considerations would be to protect the health, safety and welfare of the animals being gathered and the personnel involved. The public must adhere to guidance from the on-site BLM representative. It is BLM policy that the public would not be allowed to come into direct contact with wild horses being held in BLM facilities. Only authorized BLM personnel or contractors may enter the corrals or directly handle the animals. The general public may not enter the corrals or directly handle the animals at any time or for any reason during BLM operations.

H. Responsibility and Lines of Communication

- Worland Field Office – Contracting Officer's Representative/Project Inspector:
- Alternate – Contracting Officer's Representative/Project Inspector:
- Wyoming State Office – Contracting Officer's Representative/Project Inspector: N/A

The Contracting Officer's Representatives (CORs) and the project inspectors (PIs) have the direct responsibility to ensure the Contractor's compliance with the contract stipulations. The Worland Assistant Field Manager for Renewable Resources and the Worland Field Manager will take an active role to ensure the appropriate lines of communication are established between the field, Field Office, District Office, State Office, National Program Office, and BLM Holding Facility offices. All employees involved in the gathering operations would keep the best interests of the animals at the forefront at all times.

All publicity, formal public contact and inquiries would be handled through the Assistant Field Manager for Renewable Resources and District Public Affairs Officer. These individuals would be the primary contact and would coordinate with the COR/PI on any inquiries.

The COR would coordinate with the contractor and the BLM Corrals to ensure animals are being transported from the gather site in a safe and humane manner and are arriving in good condition.

The contract specifications require humane treatment and care of the animals during removal operations. These specifications are designed to minimize the risk of injury and death during and after gather of the animals. The specifications would be vigorously enforced.

Should the Contractor show negligence and/or not perform according to contract stipulations, he would be issued written instructions, stop work orders, or defaulted.

Attachment 2
Fifteenmile HMA Age and Sex Distribution Following Gathers

Initial Age and Sex Distribution			
Age Class	Sex		
	Female	Male	Total
Foals			
1			
2	2	3	5
3	3	4	7
4	3	5	8
5	3	4	7
6	3	4	7
7	3	5	8
8	3	5	8
9	4	6	10
10-14	8	12	20
15-19	8	12	20
20+			
Total	40	60	100